

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11

HA-05 IO-13 AID-05 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AGR-01 COME-00

EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 /106 W

-----020162 141355Z /41

P R 141210Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7199

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 2273

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GY

SUBJECT: FINAL REFERENDUM RESULTS-GOVERNMENT WINS BY 97.4

PERCENT:

REF: A. GEORGETOWN 2235, B. GEORGETOWN 2240, C. GEORGETOWN 2252

1. SUMMARY. ON JULY 13 THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THE FINAL RESULTS OF THE REFERENDUM HELD N JULY 10. OF THE TOTAL OF 431,120 VOTES CAST, 419,936 WERE IN FAVOR OF THE BILL TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION AS PROPOSED BY THE GOVERNMENT; 8,956 WERE OPPOSED TO THE BILL, AND 2,228 BALLOTS WERE SPOILED. ABOUT 70.75. PERCENT OF THE REGISTERED VOTERS (609,225) WERE SAID TO HAVE VOTED. ALTHOUGH BOTH SIDES CLAIMED HARASSMENT AND OCCASIONAL VIOLENCE, THE REFERENDUM PASSED GENERALLY QUIETLY. THE OPPOSITION ALLEGES VAST FRAUD ON THE PART OF THE GOVERNMENT, CLAIMING THAT AS LITTLE AS 10 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE ACTUALLY VOTED. INDEPENDENT OBSERVERS IN THE GEORGETOWN AREA WHO OBSERVED VOTERS GOING TO THE POLLS ON JULY 10 FOUND THAT THEIR ESTIMATES OF THE NUMBER OF THOSE VOTING WERE
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CONSIDERABLY LOWER THAN THE FIGURES RELEASED BY THE GOVERNMENT. ATTENTION NOW IS TURNING TOWARDS THE QUESTION OF THE FORMATION OF A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY WHICH MAY BE ANNOUNCED SHORTLY. THE PRIME MINISTER IS, IN SUM, WELL ON HIS WAY TO OBTAINING HIS NEW CONSTITUTION. END SUMMARY.

2. OF THE THIRTY-EIGHT ELECTION DISTRICTS, IN ONLY

SIX (ALONG THE CORENTYNE RIVER AND IN BERBICE, AREAS WITH A HEAVY INDIAN MAJORITY) DID THE PERCENTAGE OF THE ELECTORATE VOTING FALL BELOW 50 PERCENT, ACCORDING TO THE OFFICIAL FIGURES. IN SEVERAL DISTRICTS THE GOVERNMENT FIGURES REFLECT A TURNOUT OF NINETY PERCENT OR MORE OF REGISTERED VOTERS, ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT'S ORIGINAL CONTENTION THAT 99 PERCENT OF THE VOTERS IN SOUTH GEORGETOWN TURNED OUT WAS REPLACED, SOMEWHAT BLUSHINGLY, BY AN 89 PERCENT FIGURE THE NEXT DAY. THUS, ACCORDING TO THE GOVERNMENT, THE BOYCOTT ADVOCATED BY THE OPPOSITION WAS ALMOST A COMPLETE FAILURE.

3. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THE OPPOSITION HAS HEATEDLY DENIED THE ACCURACY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ELECTION DATA. IT DENIES BOTH THE TURNOUT CLAIMED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PERCENTAGE OF THOSE WHO VOTED YES. PEOPLES PROGRESSIVE PARTY (PPP) LEADER, DR. CHEDDI JAGAN, IN A PRESS CONFERENCE AFTER THE REFERENDUM AND IN TELEPHONE CALLS TO REUTER'S AND PERHAPS OTHER NEWS AGENCIES, IS SAID TO HAVE ALLEGED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SO OVERRACTED AND WAS SO OVERCONFIDENT THAT THE CALL FOR BOYCOTT WOULD NOT BE HEEDDED THAT IT INADVERTENTLY ENDED UP WITH RESULTS BLATANTLY RIDICULOUS. THE PPP "MIRROR" NEWSPAPER CLAIMED THAT PPP MEMBERS COUNTED ONLY SIXTY-NINE VOTERS IN THE CORENTYNE WEST CENTRAL DISTRICT, WHEREAS THE GOVERNMENT ALLEGES THT 3,723 VOTERS CAST THEIR BALLOTS. AT THE

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LAST MINUTE, THE PAPER ALLEGES, THE RULING PARTY STEPPED UP ITS BUSSING OF THE SAME VOTERS TO AS MANY AS TWENTY DIFFERENT POLLING PLACES.

4. INDEPENDENT OBSERVERS, INCLUDING EMBASSY OFFICERS, CASUALLY PASSED BY SEVERAL POLL STATIONS IN GEORGETO AREA. THE GOVERNMENT OWNED NEWSPAPER, THE "GUYANA CHRONICLE", CLAIMED THAT VOTING BEGAN SLOWLY BUT PICKED UP SUBSTANTIALLY LATER IN THE DAY. IF ONE DIVIDES THE NUMBER OF VOTES CAST BY THE NUMBER OF POLLING PLACES, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN NECESSARY FOR ANYWHERE FROM 800 TO 1,000 VOTERS TO HAVE VOTED AT EACH STATION DURING THE TWELVE HOUR VOTING DAY TO ACCOUNT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TOTALS. NO OBSERVERS REPORTED SUCH LEVELS OF ACTIVITY AT ANY VOTING STATION VISITED DURING THE DAY.

5. THERE WERE APPARENTLY FEW INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE, PERHAPS DUE IN PART TO EXTENSIVE PATROLS BY SECURITY FORCES. DR. MAKEPEACE RICHMOND, LEADER OF THE LIBERATOR PARTY, WAS BEATEN AND HIS CAMERA DESTROYED WHEN HE ATTEMPTED TO TAKE PICTURES OF PEOPLES NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC) STALWARTS BEING TRANSPORTED BY BUS AND VOTING AT

DIFFERENT POLLING STATIONS, AND
A FEW OTHER INCIDENTS
HAVE BEEN ALLEGED BY BOTH SIDES. WHILE THE
COMMERCIAL AND CLERICAL WORKERS' UNION CALL TO ITS
EMPLOYEES TO REMAIN AT HOME APPEARED NOT VERY SUCCESSFUL
(ONLY A FEW STORES WERE CLOSED), HEAVY RAINS AT MID-DAY
CUT BACK CONSIDERABLY ON NORMAL DOWNTOWN ACTIVITIES.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 2273

6. THE NEXT POLITICAL EVENT OF SIGNIFICANCE WILL BE
THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE PRESENT PARLIAMENT (ELECTED
IN 1973) INTO A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, ALTHOUGH NO DATES
HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE, HOWEVER,
THAT THE ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE MADE BEFORE JULY 25, THE
DATE WHEN THE PARLIAMENTARY TERM EXPIRES UNDER THE PRE-
SENT CONSTITUTION. OPPOSITION PPP LEADER JAGAN HAS
ANNOUNCED THAT THE TACTICAL ALLIANCE FORMED BETWEEN THE
PPP, THE WORKING PEOPLES' ALLIANCE, AND BLACK NATIONAL-
IST LEADER EUSI KWAYANA WILL CONTINUE IN ORDER TO
PROTEST THZM "SEMI-POLICE STATE" OF PRIME MINISTER
BURNHAM. USUALLY RELIABLE SOURCES HAVE INFORMED EMBOFFS
THAT JAGAN HAS SUGGESTED TO KWAYANA THAT HE SEEK
EXTERNAL SUPPORT FROM AFRICAN NATIONS KJD THAT BOTH
APPROACH THE UNITED NATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE.

7. APATHY AND DISILLUSIONMENT SEEM TO BE THE HALLMARKS
OF THE POPULATION AT LARGE. THERE ARE POCKETS OF

SHARP DISCONTENT, MOST NOTICEABLY THE PREDOMINANTLY
EAST INDIAN SUGAR WORKERS ALONG THE COASTS AND THE
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AFRICAN MINERS IN LINDEN. NONETHELESS, PRIME MINISTER
FORBES BURNHAM SEEMS WELL ON THE WAY TO GETTING WHAT
HE SAID HE WANTED: "...A NEW CONSTITUTION COME HELL
OR HIGH WATER."
DWYER

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